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Moscow's spy rays

"Fear is sharp-sighted," said Miguel de Cervantes, "and can see under ground." The Soviet government is giving an almost literal illustration of that, except that we would have to add, "and through the walls." American embassy officials in Moscow are dealing with a worrisome new aspect of a long-standing problem: the Soviet practice of spying on embassy business with the aid of microwave bombardments that are potentially harmful to personnel.

Third is the solution that is now being used. It is to make public what Soviet authorities clearly do not want known: that their paranoid compulsion to snoop these Batman-style devices against foreign representatives, just to find out what's being said about them. In short, we may as well use the ultimate weapon: laughter. It's one that the Communists never have been able to counter, or even understand.

The microwaves are used to activate listening devices inside the embassy building. This spy system has been in use since the mid-1960s, but the intensity of radiation has been causing renewed concern: the beams appear strong enough to cause chromosomal [hereditary] damage to people exposed to them for a long time. U.S. Ambassador Walter Stoessel has informed staff members of the problem, but beyond that it is not clear what should be done about it.

A few possible answers suggest themselves. One is what SALT negotiators refer to as "parity." The CIA could start subjecting the Soviet embassy in Washington to precisely the same levels of microwave radiation as those reported each day from Moscow. Two, we might require embassy personnel there to wear protective clothing, perhaps in a gaudy metallic sheen. [They wouldn't have to volunteer information about it, but of course could answer any questions courteously and fully.]